

Summary of Session 8: Maintaining and Extending New Learning

The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully **responding** to situations rather than immediately running off pre-programmed "automatic" **reactions** has been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard for some form of skillful action directed at achieving change in the inner or outer world. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that by carrying on trying to solve an insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up "banging one's head on a brick wall", exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one's sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, *you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful, decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude both to the situation and to your reactions to it. CHOOSING* not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.

The so-called "Serenity Prayer" asks for:

*"Grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
courage to change the things which should be changed, and the
wisdom to distinguish the one from the other".*

Where do we find this grace, this courage and this wisdom? At some level, we *already* have all of these qualities - our task is to realise them (make them real), and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

The Future

It is not always obvious what regular meditation practice is doing for us. It's like learning a new language: a few phrases each day keeps the learning alive. So a manageable amount each day is better than long gaps. We encourage you to carve out time from your busy lives to do some kind of formal meditation practice every day, even if it is only 5 minutes. It does not matter how long we give to the practice so much as that we make the attempt to pause within all the busyness. However brief these pauses are, if we are really present for them with awareness, in being mode, they can be profoundly transformative.

Regular practice of mindfulness meditation is rather like weaving a parachute. It is better to weave it every day, rather than leaving it to the time you have to jump from the plane!

*It may be helpful to ask yourself: **What is it that I value in my life?**
What we value may give intention to our practice as well as the practice itself
supporting what we value in our lives.*

*Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be in the future and
stick to it as best you can.*

*Also, remember the Breathing Space - regular practice provides a way of "checking
in with yourself" a few times a day. Let it also be your first response in times of
difficulty, stress, or unhappiness - **KEEP BREATHING!***

Sessions 1-8 Themes

Session 1: Awareness and Automatic Pilot

On automatic pilot, it is easy to drift unawares into “doing” mode and the ruminative thought patterns that can tip us back into depression. Habitual doing mode also robs us of our potential for living life more fully. We can transform our experience by *intentionally* paying attention to it in particular ways. We begin to practice stepping out of automatic pilot by paying attention intentionally, mindfully, to eating, to the sensations of the body and to aspects of everyday experience.

Practices: Raisin exercise, Body Scan

Session 2: Living in Our Heads

In doing mode, we “know about” our experience only indirectly, conceptually, through thought. This means we can easily get lost in rumination and worry. Mindfulness of the body provides an opportunity to explore a new way of knowing directly, intuitively – “experientially”. Experiential knowing is a way to be aware of unpleasant experiences without getting lost in ruminative thought. Already, most participants will be experiencing some difficulties in their practice. These difficulties offer precious opportunities to practice letting go of thinking and to connect with direct awareness of the body.

*Practices: Body Scan, Breath practice
Cognitive exercise –the power of interpretations (Thoughts & Feelings exercise... ‘walking down the street...’) (Introducing Pleasant Experiences Calendar)*

Session 3: Gathering the Scattered Mind

The mind is often scattered and lost in thought because it is working away in the background to complete unfinished tasks and strive for future goals. Instead, we need to find a way to intentionally “come back” to the here and now. The breath and body offer an ever-present focus on which we can reconnect with mindful presence, gather and settle the mind, and ease ourselves from doing into being.

*Practices: Sitting Meditation (breath & body) alt. Mindful Movement (Yoga), 3 Minute Breathing Space (basic instruction), Stretch & Breath
Cognitive exercise: Pleasant Experiences Calendar, (Introducing Unpleasant Experiences calendar)*

Session 4: Recognising Aversion

The skill of “coming back” needs to be complemented by seeing more clearly what “takes us away” into doing, rumination, mind wandering and worry. We begin the experiential investigation of “aversion”, the mind’s habitual reaction to unpleasant feelings and sensations, driven by the need not to have to have these experiences, which is at the root of emotional suffering. Mindfulness offers a way of staying present by giving another way to view things: It helps us take a wider perspective and relate differently to experience.

*Practices: Sitting meditation, Walking meditation, 3MBS (responsive/coping)
Cognitive exercises: Unpleasant Experiences Calendar, ‘territory’ of depression, ATQ*

Session 5: Allowing/Letting Be

Relating differently to unpleasant feelings and sensations – allowing things to be as they already are. We can disempower aversion by intentionally bringing to all experience a sense of “allowing” it to be just as it is, without judging it or trying to make it different. Such an attitude of acceptance embodies a basic attitude of kindness to experience. From this clear seeing we can choose what, if anything, needs to change.

Practices: Sitting meditation (introducing difficulty), 3M Extended Breathing Space (‘Body door’)

Session 6: Thoughts Are Not Facts!

Relating differently to thoughts. We free ourselves from the ruminative doing mode when we clearly see negative moods as passing states of mind, and negative thinking as the distorted products of those mind states. It is enormously liberating to realise that our thoughts are merely thoughts, even the ones that say they are not, and to recognise the contexts in which they are born.

*Practices: Sitting meditation, 3MBS (‘Thought door’)
Cognitive exercises: How mood influences thinking (office example), Relapse Signatures (Working Wisely with Depression 1), 3MBS as a ‘first step’*

Session 7: “How can I Best Take Care of Myself?”

Using skillful action to take care of ourselves in the face of lowering mood. We can lift depressed mood by intentional skillful action. We can respond more promptly and effectively to lowering mood by learning to recognise our personal pattern of warning signs. After taking a breathing space, we kindly take care of ourselves by acts that give pleasure or a sense of mastery, or provide a clear focus for mindfulness.

Practices: Sitting meditation, 3MBS (door of Skillful Action)

Cognitive exercises: Activity and Mood (nourishing & depleting), Exhaustion Funnel, Working Wisely with Depression 2, relapse prevention/actions

Session 8 : Maintaining and Extending New Learning

Planning for a new way of living. Maintaining and extending a more mindful and caring way of being requires clear intention and planning. It is helpful to link intentions for regular mindfulness practice to a personally significant value or positive reason for taking care of oneself.

Practices: Body Scan

Reviewing the course, Intentions for the future, ‘What do I value in my life’ (what we value may help give intention to our practice), how best to keep up momentum

Daily Mindfulness

- When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass by, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing - use any sound like the bell of mindfulness. Really listen, being present and awake.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something which nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while walking or standing. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. When listening can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?
- Whenever you are waiting in a line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rising and falling of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of excess tension. Is there tension stored anywhere in your body? For example - your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back. If possible stretch or do yoga once a day.
- Focus attention on your daily activities - such as brushing your teeth, brushing your hair, washing up, putting on your shoes, doing your job. Bring mindfulness to each activity.

- Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Whenever you feel you have 'lost it', when life feels really hard, or when your practice has been hard to sustain; remember that you can always come back to the breath. No matter how long you've been away, you can always start over again, in this moment, right here, right now.

Adapted from: Madeline Klyne, Instructor, Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts Center (personal communication). Copyright Madeline Klyne. Adapted by permission.

5 Tips for Sustaining a Daily Mindfulness Practice

1) **Do some practice, no matter how brief, every day.**

The "everydayness" of practice is hugely important as a way to keep mindfulness fresh, available, ready for you whenever you need it most—because you never know when that will be! Internationally respected meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein recommends that his students sit down to meditate every day—**even if only for ten seconds**. Experience suggests that, most often, those ten seconds will be enough to encourage you to sit longer.

2) **If at all possible, do the practice at the same time, in the same place, each day.**

That way mindfulness gets built into the very fabric of your daily routine. Then, just as with brushing your teeth, you don't have to ponder whether to do it or not—you do it because that's what you always do at that point in your routine.

3) **See practice as a way to nourish yourself, rather than another thing on your "to do" list.**

Remember that the practice won't always feel nourishing—as much as you can, let the practice be as it is, letting go of your ideas of how it should be or of regarding it as part of a "project" of self-improvement.

4) **Explore ways to practice with other people.**

Practicing regularly with others—in what is often called a "sitting group"—is one of the most powerful ways to keep your practice vital and alive. If you learned MBCT with a group, look out for opportunities for reunions and practice days. Everyone can benefit from finding a mindfulness "buddy" with whom to practice and share experiences from time to time. *Even if it's only one person, joining with others to practice and share experiences is hugely, and often surprisingly, supportive.*

5) **Remember, you can always begin again.**

The essence of mindfulness practice is letting go of the past and starting afresh in each new moment (as you've already practiced many, many times in coming back to the breath when the mind has wandered). In the same way, if you find that you haven't practiced for a while, rather than criticizing yourself or ruminating about why, **just begin again, right there and then, by taking a three-minute breathing space.**

Mindfulness and Mastery in the Workplace: 21 Ways to Reduce Stress during the Working Day

The following '21 ways' are simply a road map. I wish you peace and well-being as you explore the territory and discover your 'ways'.

- 1) Take a few minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate - sit or lie down and be with yourself... gaze out of the window, listen to the sounds of nature or take a slow, quiet walk.
- 2) While your car is warming up - take a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.
- 3) While driving, become aware of body tension eg hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel - shoulders raised - stomach tight, etc. Consciously work at releasing, dissolving that tension.does being tense help you to drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?
- 4) Decide not to play the radio and be with yourself, mindfully.
- 5) Stay in the left-hand lane and travel at an easy speed.
- 6) Pay attention to your breathing or to the sky.....trees, etc. when stopped at the traffic lights or in a queue.
- 7) Take a moment to orientate yourself to the day ahead once you have parked your car at your workplace.
- 8) While sitting at your desk, computer etc. monitor bodily sensations - tension levels, again consciously attempting to relax and let go of excess tension.
- 9) Use your breaks to truly relax rather than simply 'pausing' – e.g. instead of having a coffee or a cigarette, take a few minutes to walk or sit at your desk and recuperate.
- 10) At lunch, changing your environment can be helpful
- 11) Or, try closing your door (if you have one) and take some time to consciously relax.
- 12) Decide to 'stop' for 1-2 minutes every hour during the day. During this time, become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations. Use it as a time to refresh and recuperate.
- 13) Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to 'center' yourself; e.g.:
 - the telephone ringing
 - saving your computer file
- 14) Take some time at lunch or break to chat with close associates. Choose topics that are not necessarily work related.
- 15) Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use it as a time to eat slowly and be with yourself.
- 16) When work finishes, retrace your activities of the day, acknowledge and congratulate yourself for what you have accomplished and make a list of what you intend to do tomorrow.

- 17) Pay attention to the short walk to your car - breathing the crisp air. The feeling of the cold or warmth of your body - try to accept it rather than resist it. Listen to the sounds outside the office. Can you walk without feeling rushed?
- 18) While your car is warming-up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home - take a moment to simply *be* - enjoy it for a moment. Like most of us, you're heading into the next full-time job - home!
- 19) While driving, notice if you are rushing. What does this feel like? What could you do about it? Remember, you've got more control than you might imagine.
- 20) When you pull into the driveway or park on the street, take a minute to come back to the present. Orientate yourself to being with your family members
- 21) Change out of work clothes when you get home; it helps you to make a smoother transition into your next 'role' - you can spare the few minutes it takes to do this. Say 'hello' to each of your family members - center yourself at home. If possible, make time to take 5-10 minutes to be quiet and still before starting the evening.

Further Opportunities for Practice

Midweek Mindfulness Oxford:

**A weekly mindfulness meditation group held at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre
Thursday evenings, 6 - 8 pm**

Registration: 6pm Practice: 6.15-6.45pm

Break: 6.45-7pm Practice: 7-7.40pm

Please feel free to attend all or part of the evening, but please arrive either at 6pm or 6.45 to register, as entry to the building is restricted at other times.

Cost is £5 per evening.

This group is here to support your mindfulness practice – regular attendance not necessary, just come as and when you are able. When you come for the first time please let us have your email address so that you can be kept informed of any changes to dates and times.

omcsittinggroup@psych.ox.ac.uk

Day Retreats in Oxford:

www.oxfordgaiahousetretreats.co.uk

See what others say about mindfulness

<http://www.bemindful.co.uk/>

<http://oxfordmindfulness.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Oxfordmindfulness>

https://twitter.com/omc_mindfulness

Sample Reading List

Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Full Catastrophe Living**
1990, Dell Publishing (ISBN 0-385-30312-2)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Wherever You Go, There You Are**
1994, Hyperion (ISBN 0-7868-8070-8)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Coming To Our Senses**
2005, Piatkus (ISBN 0-7499-2588-4)

Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Everyday Blessings. The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting**
2005, Hyperion (ISBN 0-7868-8314-6)

Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark Williams, John D. Teasdale, **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression**
2012, Guildford Press (ISBN 1-4625-0750-6)

Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark Williams, John D. Teasdale, **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression**
2002, Guildford Press (ISBN 1-57230-706-4)

J. Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindal V. Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn, **The Mindful Way through Depression. Freeing Yourself From Chronic Unhappiness**
2007, Guilford Press (ISBN 1-59385-128-6)

John Teasdale, J. Mark Williams, Zindel Segal, **The Mindful Way Workbook**
2014, Guilford Press (ISBN 978-1-4625-0814-3)

Mark Williams and Danny Penman, **Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World**
2011, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-5308-9)

J. Mark Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Mindfulness: Diverse Perspective on its Meaning, Origins and Applications**
2013, Routledge (ISBN 978-0-415-63647-6)

Sarah Silverton and John Kabat-Zinn, **The Mindfulness Breakthrough: The Revolutionary Approach to Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression**
2012, Watkins Publishing LTD (ISBN 1-7802-8107-2)

Daniel Siegel, **Mindsight: Transform your Brain with the New Science of Kindness**
2010, Oneworld Publications (ISBN 978-1-85168-761-9)

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, **Mindfulness in Plain English**
2002, Wisdom Publications, U.S. (ISBN 0-8617-1906-9)

Vidyamala Burch, **Living Well with Pain & Illness. The Mindful Way to Free yourself from Suffering**

2008, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-2860-5)

Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman, **Mindfulness for Health: A Practical Guide to Reliving Pain, Reducing Stress and Restoring Wellbeing**

2013, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-5924-1)

Saki Santorelli, **Heal Thyself: Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine**

1999, Bell Tower (ISBN 0-609-80504-5)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, **Arriving at your own Door (108 lessons in Mindfulness)**

2008, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-2861-2)

Christopher Titmuss, **Mindfulness for everyday living**

2003, Barron's Educational Series (ISBN 0-7641-2260-6)

Jack Kornfield, **A Path with Heart**

1993, Bantam Books (ISBN 0-7126-5780-0)

Jack Kornfield, **After the Ecstasy, the Laundry**

2000, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-0658-0)

Thich Nhat Hanh, **The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching**

1999, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-7003-3)

Thich Nhat Hanh, **Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness In Everyday Life**

1991, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-7406-3)

Larry Rosenberg, **Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation**

2004, Shambhala Publications Inc (ISBN 1-5903-0136-4)

Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield, **Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation**

2001, Shambhala Publications Inc (ISBN 1-5706-2805-X)

Sharon Salzberg, **The Force of Kindness: Change Your Life With Love & Compassion**

2012, ReadHowYouWant (ISBN 1-4596-1916-1)

Tim Stead, **Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality: Making Space for God**

2016, SPCK (ISBN 978-0281-07486-0)

Kate Karne, **Seven Secrets of Mindfulness: How to keep your everyday practice Alive.**

2016, Rider (ISBN 978-1-84604-504-2)